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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ACCRA 000673

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DEPT FOR AF/FO AND AF/W

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [SNAR](#) [PINR](#) [GH](#)
SUBJECT: AF/W DIRECTOR THOMAS DOUGHERTY'S MEETINGS WITH THE
NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS LEADERSHIP

REF: A. ACCRA 627
[B. ACCRA 623](#)
[C. ACCRA 618](#)
[D. ACCRA 617](#)
[E. ACCRA 612](#)
[F. ACCRA 605](#)

Classified By: Ambassador Pamela E. Bridgewater for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1. \(C\)](#) Summary: On May 19, National Democratic Congress (NDC) presidential candidate John Atta Mills told visiting AF/W Director Thomas Dougherty that he is determined to ensure a peaceful election in Ghana but that his confidence in the Electoral Commission (EC) has "been shaken." Should there be perceptions that the election is not free and fair, he said, it will be difficult to maintain control over NDC supporters who remember 2004 election challenges that were never resolved. Mills said the New Patriotic Party's (NPP) positive international image was undeserved, citing the increase in narcotics trafficking under President Kufuor's leadership, and allegations surrounding NPP candidate Nana Akufo-Addo (including the reported arrest of an individual that Mills' described as Akufo-Addo's "brother-in-law" on cocaine trafficking charges in Brazil). Mills was optimistic regarding his party's chances in December, saying that Ghanaians are feeling the economic pinch and that the NPP has not fulfilled promises, leading many NPP supporters to turn to the NDC. In a follow-up meeting with the NDC party leadership, the party Chairman and General Secretary echoed Mills' sentiments, and complained that the government's failure to adequately fund the EC and National Commission for Civic Education (NCEE) threatened to undermine the integrity of the electoral process. Meetings with other parties and the Electoral Commission will be reported Septel. End Summary.

[2. \(U\)](#) On May 19, visiting AF/W Director Thomas Dougherty, accompanied by POL Chief, met with NDC presidential candidate John Atta Mills at Mills' Accra office. Mills was accompanied by former Minister of Energy and Trade Ato Ahwoi, Chief of Staff Antwi Bosainko, and former Vice Presidential Candidate and Minister of Employment Alhaji Mohammed Mumuni.

2008 Elections

[3. \(C\)](#) After welcoming Dougherty, Mills said that he would do everything in his power to maintain peace in Ghana during the 2008 elections. He said the NDC is concerned that the elections must be free, fair, and transparent, but that because of their experience, they are being careful and vigilant. Mills said his confidence in the Electoral Commission (EC) has "been shaken," particularly due to the controversy over bloated voter registers in the Ashanti region that may have inflated the number of voters by 600,000, while Kufuor won the 2004 election by between 300-400,000 votes. "Can anyone," asked Mills, "assume this

will not be repeated?"

¶4. (C) Mills added that he is the leader "of a big group." If the election is not fair and transparent, "it will be difficult to prevent our supporters from going into the street." This is a particular concern, he stressed, because in 2004 the NDC had filed a challenge to some of the election results in court, but the case was never resolved. The NDC, said Mills, "will play according to the rules."

NPP Shortcomings

¶5. (C) Mills commented that the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government has "an image it doesn't deserve." He referenced an article in the May 19 Daily Graphic reporting that a Ghanaian drug baron had been arrested in Brazil, stating that the baron (Raymond Kwame Amankwah) is the brother-in-law of NPP presidential candidate Nana Akufo-Addo. (NOTE: On May 19 the Daily Graphic reported the arrest of Raymond Kwame Amankwah in Brazil on cocaine trafficking charges. Mills' "brother-in-law" comment refers to the fact that Amankwah's sister is married to one of Akufo-Addo's brothers. Rumors of an inappropriate relationship between Amankwah and Akufo-Addo go back to Kufuor's first term, when property that had been seized from Amankwah in Ghana due to drug-related activities was inexplicably returned to him while Akufo-Addo served as Attorney General. END NOTE). Mills said that the Graphic is "selling like hotcakes" but that the government was attempting to buy up copies of the paper to limit the damage and had pressured other newspapers not to print the story. Mills noted that Ghana is becoming a transit point for drug

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trafficking and said Akufo-Addo himself had been accused of involvement in drugs.

¶6. (C) Despite the positive image that President Kufuor has created internationally, Mills said the situation in Ghana is "not the best." While water has become "a rare commodity," the President is "putting up a \$50 million palace and buying two airplanes." Mills said the NDC will accept the results if the election is free and fair, adding: "we only want power if it is not tainted by violence -- however, the signs on the wall are not encouraging."

¶7. (C) Mills also said that the NPP prides itself on U.S. support and drops hints that the U.S. favors it in the upcoming elections. In that light, Mills said the USG could contribute to a fair process by making clear to the government that the U.S. is closely watching the proceedings. He also said the NDC welcomes international observers for the electoral process.

Election Preparations & NDC Prospects

¶8. (C) Former Trade Minister Ahwoi expressed concern over the organization of the electoral process, noting that electoral registers should by law be updated each year, but that this has not happened. He said that in 2004 the EC sent voter ID workstations in much greater numbers to NPP strongholds. Mills added that the NPP has also had the advantage in terms of access to the media, but admitted that the NDC was "making progress" in obtaining equal coverage.

¶9. (C) Responding to Dougherty's question regarding the NDC's prospects, Mills said that the party is seeing bigger crowds than in 2004. People are feeling an economic pinch, and the NPP made many promises that it has not fulfilled. Many NPP supporters are coming over to the NDC. Mills acknowledged that the Ashanti region is an NPP stronghold, but he expects to increase the NDC's percentage of the vote there. He said the party expects to win in Accra (a traditional swing district), but that the Eastern Region will remain a challenge. Mills added that the NDC expects to win in the

first round.

Policy

¶10. (SBU) Mills said that a basic difference between the right of center NPP and the NDC is that the NDC are social democrats, believing that the state should be more responsive toward the marginalized and poor, with a stronger emphasis on providing social services. The party would focus on providing water and improving education. However, the NDC also believes that the private sector is the engine of economic growth.

Oil

¶11. (SBU) In managing Ghana's expected oil revenue, Mills said he was mindful of the example set by Nigeria and other countries that were "supposedly blessed" by oil. He said that an independent, professional group should manage oil revenue and account to the people of Ghana. It should be used to develop Ghana and "every pesewa" should be accounted for.

Narcotics/Corruption

¶12. (C) On combating drugs and corruption, Mills said that "the fish rots from the head down." He noted that President Kufuor had run on a platform of "zero tolerance" for corruption in 2001, but that the problem was much worse today. Mills said that drug barons are conspiring with the top leadership, emphasizing the reported arrest of Akufo-Addo's "brother in law," the disappearance of 77 parcels of cocaine from a police storage facility, and the huge amounts of money spent by NPP presidential candidates during the primary process. The NPP's money, alleged Mills, is coming from either corruption or drugs, vowing that he would not allow Ghana to become a haven from drug barons.

¶13. (SBU) When pressed for details on how he would address corruption, Mills said that first, the leadership must set a good example. In addition, he said he would look at the system of wages and ensure it was "fair and rational," stressing that while there is nothing wrong with wealth, "stealing from State coffers is not acceptable."

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Foreign Policy

¶14. (SBU) Mills said there would be no major changes in foreign policy under an NDC government, and expected to continue to maintain strong relations with the U.S. The NDC would put the interests of Ghana first. Ghana would continue to support peacekeeping, but Mills stressed the need to promote peace through diplomacy and said Ghana would pursue a "mediating role" in crises.

Meeting with NDC Leadership

¶15. (U) After meeting with Mills, Dougherty visited NDC headquarters to meet with party Chairman Kwabena Adjei, General Secretary Johnson Asiedu Nketia, Vice Chairman Alhaji Hudu Yahaya, Deputy Minority Leader in Parliament Edward Adjaho, Treasurer Gladys Clark Kwesie, and Director of International Relations Kofi Addo.

¶16. (SBU) General Secretary Nketia began by stressing the NDC's commitment to sustaining democracy in Ghana, noting that the best way to do this is to ensure that the will of the people is freely expressed. The NDC, he said, has concerns about the December elections, including abuse of

incumbency by the NPP (such as the misuse of state resources such as vehicles for political purposes), problems with the integrity of the voter register being bloated in the NPP strongholds, and inadequate funding for the Electoral Commission and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), two institutions that Nketia stressed were critical to the electoral process.

¶17. (SBU) Nketia elaborated on the government's failure to adequately fund the EC, stressing that this could affect the integrity of the election. For example, he noted that the EC should have begun voter registration in 2007 but has failed to begin the process. The fear is that the parties will not have adequate time to scrutinize the register before the elections take place. He also noted that by failing to adequately fund the NCCE, voter education efforts would be adversely affected and many voters would not know where to go.

¶18. (SBU) Nketia also commented on the EC's failure to procure sufficient digital cameras to conduct voter registration on time and in 5000 districts (the EC has proposed to split the country into two zones and conduct registration in each zone on separate dates), a proposal that was rejected by all parties at the last Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) meeting. He noted that the government said publicly that it had provided all necessary funds to the EC, but had not been transparent with Parliament, promising in late 2007 to submit a supplemental EC budget, but never delivering this budget request.

¶19. (SBU) Alhaji Yahaya echoed the comments of John Atta Mills, noting that the NDC would welcome international observers for the election, but stressed that the observers should watch what goes on before the election (such as the registration process), and not just election day.

Comment

¶20. (C) While the NDC appears confident in its position seven months before the election, it continues to stress its concern over alleged shortcomings in the organization of the election process. These concerns are legitimate, particularly given the EC's failure to provide a satisfactory explanation for the inflated voter registers in Ashanti, its postponement of the voter registration process, and its lack of transparency on key issues such as its budget and lack of equipment. The NDC also continues to emphasize their concern over narcotics trafficking in Ghana, recognizing an apparent weakness for Akufo-Addo and the NPP. While this appears to be a sound approach, particularly given the questions that have been raised regarding associates of Akufo-Addo, it remains to be seen whether this issue will resonate with the public. End Comment

¶21. (U) This cable was cleared by AF/W Director Dougherty.
BRIDGEWATER